

COASTAL COMMUNICATORS

A newsletter for the nation's coastal management and research reserve programs.

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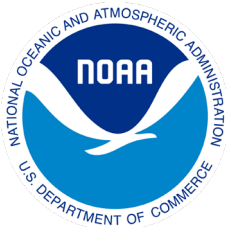
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GOOD WRITING IS
SUPPOSED TO EVOKE
SENSATION IN THE
READER—NOT THE FACT
THAT IT IS RAINING, BUT
THE FEELING OF BEING
RAINED UPON.

– E.L. Doctorow

May 2023, Issue 53



COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS

PUBLIC SPEAKING TIPS

I attended [Coastal GeoTools 2023](#), and it was a blast. This conference marries technology and coastal zone management, which is pretty unusual. It is here that the techies in our field come together to showcase the best in data, tools, and training, and illustrate how these resources are used to help communities become more resilient.

The majority of the speakers were really good, and I was impressed by the polish and professionalism displayed. What follows relays some of the recurring attributes I saw in the kick-butt presentations. How do your presentations stack up against this checklist?

Stick to the time allotted. People did amazingly well here, and it was appreciated. The sessions were on time, which meant no long-winded speakers cutting in on the next person's allotted time.

I'm not sure how this happened so consistently, but from my personal experience, practice is what helps my presentations stay within the allotted time. My problem is I speak too fast, which I have to work to address. It seems counterintuitive, but when I don't practice, I have a tendency to run long and ramble. It's not pretty. Practice means different things to different people, but for me, I write the presentation in its entirety, then practice, out loud, from an outline. This helps me adjust my timing and get a better sense of where the dead spots in the presentation are.

On a related note, let's talk about those "fast" talks that are so popular these days. That's where the presenter uses a minimal number of slides and talks for five to ten minutes. The crowd loved these sessions, yet it was hard to get presenters to participate, since going short (in writing and presenting) is actually harder than going long. But try it. It's like exercise—it's good for you, your topic, and your audience.

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Deliver the main point right away. Another counterintuitive move for the science and government sector: giving the audience the big reveal up front. Like in the second slide. Presentations that did this grabbed me in the first couple of minutes and didn't let go. Here's an example of how this played out in one presentation.

1. These high-resolution land cover data, which have never been available before, will revolutionize the way we do business. And they're available, free of charge, from the Digital Coast.
2. This is what the data look like and how they're used.
3. Here's how the data were gathered. And I'd be remiss if I didn't thank our partners for making it possible.

Admittedly this approach wasn't used as often as I would have liked, but when it was, boy, did it sing.

Tell stories. If you have real-life stories about how people are interacting with the topic, talk about it. People love that, and it really brings home your points.

One word of warning, however: this technique can be overused. In one GeoTools presentation, the presenter told story after story, but after a short while all of the stories ran together, and I wasn't sure about the point he was trying to make. Probably best to state your point, then tell a short story. Then make another point, and tell a short story. Make sure each component of your story is supporting your main point (which means you are being choosy about which details to include), or otherwise you too might veer into "blah, blah, blah" territory.

No acronyms.

No reading your slides.

No "I know you can't read this, but I'm showing it anyway" statements.

Is there anyone reading this article who doesn't know and believe in these three points? (I'm dreaming—I know there is some pushback regarding the acronym thing, but surely we agree on the other two bullets.) I saw very few people read from their slides, which was great. And many at least defined the acronyms used, which is progress in my book. But the "I know you can't read this, but I'm showing it anyway" statement? I heard that several times. It didn't kill the presentation for me, but it was wasted time.

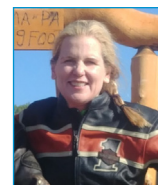
Repeat the audience member's question. People have made this a habit, which is great. Don't forget to do this, because it really helps the audience, and can help ensure you understand what is being asked. It will also give you a few extra seconds to start compiling a reply in your head.

Let your enthusiasm show. As an audience member, I can forgive a lot when the person doing the speaking lets his or her enthusiasm shine. You like your work, right? You are proud of what you've accomplished, and rightly so. Let that enthusiasm come out.

At this conference, one presenter said, "I've been working toward this moment for 20 years, and I couldn't be prouder of our team and what we have to show you today. We are making a difference for the future of our coasts." How can you not get excited when you hear that intro?!

Last thoughts. If you want to start a presentation improvement process, I'd start with "get to your point right away" and "let your enthusiasm show." These two techniques can overcome a lot of public speaking sins. What you put on your slides also matters. We will cover that in our next issue of *Coastal Communicators*. Stay tuned.

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COMMUNICATION PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Featured products: “NERR or Far” podcast and website

Source: nerrorfar.weebly.com

Submitted by: Caitlyn McCrary and Pamela Jacobs, Lynker for NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management

What it is: Kaitlyn Dirr, a NOAA Hollings Scholar from the University of South Carolina, interviewed staff from eight Southeast research reserves as part of her senior thesis. She used the content to create a podcast series, “NERR or Far: The Reserves Are Where You Are,” and built a website to host the series. The website also features student worksheets and teacher answer keys so that these podcasts can be incorporated into lesson plans for middle school, high school, and introductory college coursework.

Why we like it: One of the best ways to ensure a communication product is successful is to make sure it’s timely and relevant. The popularity of podcasts is only growing; there are currently 465 million global podcast listeners, and the number is expected to reach 505 million by the end of 2024.* Through an educational product in this medium, the featured reserves, and in turn the system as a whole, are reaching and appealing to a wider, younger

audience—the environmental stewards of the future. The addition of learning materials for students and teachers, supplemental videos, and extra interview questions and answers makes it an especially engaging product. While the podcasts and website are each excellent standalone materials, together they serve as an impressive package and the perfect introduction to the reserve system for students and educators.

About the creator: Kaitlyn Dirr is graduating (two days after publication of this article!) from the Honors College at the University of South Carolina with a B.S. in biological sciences and a minor in marine science. In her time as an undergraduate, Kaitlyn was involved with research related to zooplankton ecology and gopher tortoise burrow use. She also served as the Rookery Bay Reserve avian intern and NOAA Hollings Scholar in the summer of 2022. She hopes to continue to be involved in science communication and outreach after graduation, and to find ways to increase access to regional conservation information and help foster stewardship of coastal and estuarine environments.

*Source: [41+ Podcast Statistics for 2023](#)

(Please note: this is not an endorsement of the designers, websites, or any proprietary tools, but simply this writer’s opinion on a good communication product.)

Welcome to NERR or Far!



FROM US TO YOU

OUTREACH TOOL SPOTLIGHT – PRESENTATION TIPS VIDEO

This month's article, "Public Speaking Tips," covers some of the most fundamental but effective ways to deliver a successful presentation. And this new video brings those principles to life. Whether you want to use it as a confidence-booster before a big speech, share it with coworkers and partners who suffer from Americans' number-one fear (yup, public speaking), or watch it before diving into your speech and slideshow prep, it's a quick way to set yourself up for success. View it here: coast.noaa.gov/gallery/videos/presentation-tips/video.html.

UPCOMING SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and tag along with these themes:

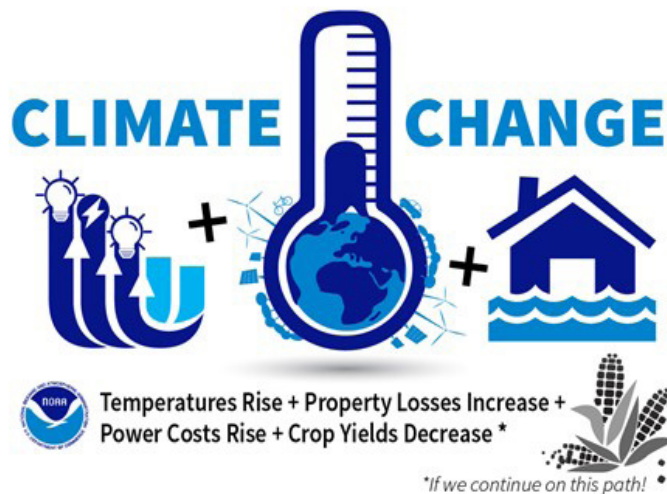
- May 1 to 5: Hurricane Prep
- May 8 to 12: Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- May 15 to 19: Florida (East Coast)
- May 22 to 26: Georgia
- May 29 to June 2: South Carolina

HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION AWARDS

Congratulations to all of the research reserves and state programs that have projects selected for funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. This is an exciting, historic investment in coastal resilience and a testament to the importance of the work you do. If you want to know more about the infrastructure law grants that are being administered by the Office for Coastal Management—how much funding will be available, eligible uses, where to find future funding opportunity notices—check out our website: coast.noaa.gov/funding/infrastructure.html. And if you'd like to read about all of the coastal management projects that were recently announced, you can find the full project list here: coast.noaa.gov/data/coasthome/funding/_pdf/czm-nerr-restoration-acquisition-awards.pdf.

FAST FACTS – CLIMATE CHANGE

This is one of the many graphics and facts available for your use in presentations and handouts. Grab this one at coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/climate-change.html. If you have an idea for a new group of fast facts or illustrations, please let us know.



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Send questions or suggestions to coastal.info@noaa.gov.

View past issues at coast.noaa.gov/gallery/newsletter.html.

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